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Social Entrepreneurship in Developing Economies: The Case of Mozambique

Social entrepreneurship research has tended to employ normative Western assumptions. This paper examines how social entrepreneurship emerges in a multicultural context. It draws on an ethnographic study conducted in Mozambique to explore how multiple logics of action are utilised to give meaning to local social entrepreneurial practices. The findings suggest that social entrepreneurship takes diverse forms in the context of a developing economy, including grassroots indigenous practices. This paper contributes to theory development by bridging different social entrepreneurial activities with repertoires of action at the micro-level which illustrate specific cultural logical frameworks. It also provides a reflexive critique of Western dominant conceptualisations and models of social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; context; developing economies; institutional logics

Word Count: 2503

INTRODUCTION

Social Entrepreneurship (SE) is widely recognised as an efficient mechanism to address social and environmental challenges in receptive developed economies. According to Bornstein (2007), crucial changes contributed to the emergence of SE: (1) increase in prosperity leading to a growing middle class and wealth generation to finance social ventures; (2) greater number of democratic societies allowing citizens to freely contribute to social/environmental improvement outside public and private spheres. Such conditions are not prevalent across the word, namely in low-income economies or semi-democratic regimes.

Research on SE has mostly been conducted in modern industrialised countries (Doherty et al., 2014; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Also, existing studies on SE have tended to assume Western institutional conditions are applicable across contexts (Desa, 2012). This specific limitation resonates with a wider growing recognition that entrepreneurship theory has yet to consider the influence of context (Jennings et al., 2013; Welter, 2011; Umoren, 2010).

A SE movement headed by international elites[1] is gaining momentum in contemporary market economies. This movement, demanding a widespread ethical and socially-inclusive type of capitalism, led to increased visibility of examples of SE taking place in developing countries (Dacin at al., 2011). Many studies highlight exceptional impactful cases (Alvord et al., 2004; Santos, 2012), *e.g.* Grameen Bank (Bangladesh), Aravind Eye Clinic (India). These high-profile stories give salience to local social entrepreneurs who happen to be highly educated people. Another stream of literature analyses SE ventures, operating in developing countries, supported by foreign development organisations (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), or developed countries organisations aiming at serving poor nations (Seelos & Mair, 2005a; Dorado & Ventresca, 2012). International social endeavours reinforce SE globalisation potential (Zahra et al., 2008) yet they do not illustrate grassroots SE in developing economies: the potential existence of 'barefoot' SE (Imas et al., 2012) where primarily necessity-driven informal practices prevail.

This paper responds to calls for a more contextual approach to SE studies by examining accounts and practices of a plurality of actors from different social levels in Mozambique. It focuses, in particular, on an observed local practice prevalent in the country, *Xitique*. Xitique participants contribute a fixed sum on a regular basis which is lent in turn to each member of the group. It operates like a folk banking system; an informal arrangement based on trust and reciprocity[2]. The following research question was derived: how are multiple logics of action utilised in the emerging field of SE in a developing economy, and to what extent do they shape local SE models?

In order to address this question, a reflexive ethnographic study was conducted. Conventional conceptualisations and models of SE, being 'transplanted' into developing economies, are contrasted with indigenous organisational forms. Such approach is expected to improve our understanding of how SE interpretations and practices are a result of embeddedness in cultural logical frameworks. Subjects mobilise in everyday life multiple institutional logics, *i.e.* taken-for-granted social prescriptions (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), to assign meaning to their practices; logics shape their motivations, expectations, and goals (Thornton, 2004).

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[1] Skoll Foundation, Ashoka Organisation, Schwab Foundation, University Business Schools etc.

[2] Similar informal saving practices have been documented around the developing world (Bouman, 1977). They are referred to in the microfinance literature as 'Rotating Savings and Credit Associations' - ROSCA (Bouman, 1983)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social Entrepreneurship and Developing Economies

SE is broadly defined as entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose (Austin et al., 2006). It extends established capitalist notions with the assumption that not-for-profit and for-profit operations are not mutually exclusive (Murphy & Coombes, 2009). However, the concept is interpreted differently by different people (Nicholls, 2010; Dacin at al., 2011).

SE is acknowledged as not necessarily reliant on commercial means (Tracey & Phillips, 2007). It focuses on reconfiguring resources to generate social value whilst social enterprise concerns the use of business methods to produce income to sustain social activities (CASE, 2008). Thus, SE can take innovative forms away from a market-based logic (Luke & Chu, 2012). All types of SE, not-for-profit, for-profit or hybrid ventures[3], have to be considered to better understand the idiosyncrasies of a research context where the concept is not yet widely recognised despite the overwhelming presence of international development organisations (Seelos & Mair, 2005b)[4].

Mozambique is a fast growing economy yet still one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2014). Government development strategies focus on economic growth, not necessarily entailing the economic empowerment of poor people (Eusébio, 2006). This study was conducted in Maputo, a setting marked by economic inequality and the presence of diverse social groups. 'Communities' from all over the world cohabit in this multicultural site, over-reliant on foreign investment and donor funding (De Renzio & Hanlon, 2007); the paper contrasts this plurality of local actors[5].

Poor countries lack structures to enable or support entrepreneurship[6]. Hence, manifestations of SE encompass alternative organisational forms across sectors and creative social practices (Watson, 2013) which reconcile very limited and disparate resources (Seelos & Mair, 2005a). In the Western world, governments have been applying resources to promote SE (Nicholls, 2010). Conversely, developing countries experience economic deprivation and institutional constraints (Desa, 2012). They manifest ambiguous institutional environments which lead to variance in choice of SE organisational forms (Townsend & Hart, 2008) in order to fill in policy and regulative gaps (Welter, 2011). Although there is some consensus that SE is attributed with achieving greater economic efficiencies under conditions of resource scarcity (Short et al., 2009; Chell, 2007), little is known about how it unfolds in unfavourable institutional environments (Desa, 2012).

This paper addresses two key gaps in the literature: firstly, the limited SE inquiry on developing economies' contexts presenting unfavourable and intricate institutional environments; secondly, the de-contextualised nature of entrepreneurship theory, which has implications for explaining SE unconventional forms. This entails an analysis of cultural logical arrangements which affect how SE is translated in the region. The paper considers variations of SE as a function of cultural embeddedness, distinctive social needs and contextual circumstances.

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[3] Organisations that generate profits to sustain a social mission

[4] For the purposes of this study, SE is defined as the recognition of a social need and consequent utilisation of entrepreneurial principles and strategies to create and manage new and innovative social ventures or existing organisational forms, in order to achieve a desirable social change

[5] By key local actors is it meant individuals and social groups operating locally, directly or indirectly involved in SE (impoverished vs resourceful, native vs international, educated vs illiterate)

[6] For example, in Mozambique there is not a legal form for social enterprises

Institutional Logics and Context

Institutional logics (ILs) are macro-level belief systems that shape the cognition and behaviour of organisations and individuals (Thornton, 2004). Friedland & Alford (1991) stress how meanings, values and practices should be positioned in a societal context. They explore the interrelationships between individuals, organisations and society and propose that contradictory ILs provide ground for change. SE tends to utilise hybrid models of conflicting 'logics of action', i.*e.* for-profit and not-for-profit activities. These logics have been examined within Western contexts using the institutional logics perspective (ILP) (Jay, 2013; Tracey et al., 2011; Pache & Santos, 2012; Mair et al., 2015). This paper employs the ILP to understand how potentially conflicting logics from Western and non-Western cultures interplay, within the field of SE; allowing for broader conditions and situated factors to be brought into the analysis and built into the explanation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). 'Western' and 'non-Western' classification systems are utilised as reference points. Such taxonomy may be considered ambiguous and controversial by some. However, it was used by renowned sociologists in an attempt to explain the social world[7].

The ILP explains how people's actions and interpretations are rooted in prevailing ILs (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). From this lens, society is viewed as an interinstitutional system (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Each institutional order builds around a cornerstone institution and its logics. Multiple logics constitute frames of reference affecting actors' reasoning and choices.[8]

The ILP incorporates macro-structural effects on action together with culture, agency and process. Hence, cross-cultural tensions and institutional ambiguity give scope for actors to mobilise, decompose and hybridise distinctive logics assigning alternative meanings to their practices. The ILP is also supposed to represent "a general model of cultural heterogeneity un-biased toward the Western world" (Thornton et al., 2012: 18). This provides a means to contextualise empirical studies. However, it is arguable whether the way ILs are framed within the interinstitutional system, mostly based on Western rationalities (modern capitalist societies), can be applicable across cultures since rationalities are culturally embedded and context-dependent (Townley, 2008). Individuals are exposed to different cultural influences (Pache & Santos, 2013). Thus, researching 'non-Western' societies offers opportunities to develop and further extend the ILP applicability.

Contextualising phenomena is crucial to theory building and testing (Whetten, 1989), as is the recognition of context heterogeneity (Zahra & Wright, 2011). Few studies bridge diverse contexts (Welter, 2011), embracing the knowledge of cross-cultural social groups to reproduce or disrupt the interinstitutional system. Contextually aware research, exploring multiple variables[9] may explain how SE expresses itself in developing economies.

This study generates insights on repertoires of action which elucidate how individuals are positioned and interpret the social context (Powell and Colyvas, 2008). It incorporates *cultural embeddedness*[10] to explain why specific ILs supersede others at the micro-level.

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[7] In this paper, Western and non-Western cultures are acknowledged as heterogeneous per se, in that each may embody distinctive rationalities based on the valorisation of particular logics

[8] It has been assumed market, state, corporation, and professional logics are predominant in modern societies, whereas family, religion, and community tend to be prevalent in less-westernised countries (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008)

[9] *E.g.* informal networks, cultural beliefs and practices, stakeholders' plurality

[10] Defined as "the culture of social groups, of which individuals are members, providing individuals with symbolic structures to understand and construct their environments" (Thornton et al., 2012: 79)

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

The paper draws on interpretivist social theories (Denzin, 1997). The overall design is grounded on a reflexive ethnographic methodology. Reflexivity is integrated at both personal and broader cultural levels. Ethnography is appropriate to intimately examine cross-cultural interactions, where plural actors utilise conflicting ILs to achieve personal or organisational goals. Ethnographic fieldwork entailed different degrees of immersion via formal interviews, conversations, participant observation[11].

Data Collection

The research project involved three fieldtrips. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted whilst living in the country for three consecutive months. Materials include: field notes; photographs, audio/video-recordings of seventy-five semi-structured interviews (including members of the government, governmental agencies, DFID, WB and UN representatives, local and international NGOs, MNC executives, SMEs, micro-finance institutions, religious organisations, academic researchers, journalists, social entrepreneurs, SE promoters); and informal conversations with other residents, beneficiaries and members of deprived communities. These generated detailed in-depth written and audio-visual data. Organisations' brochures, online data, and media coverage were analysed, accounting for wider societal discourses. The utilisation of multiple methods and several sources allowed for triangulation to confer credibility, consistency and empirical validity to the research findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A snowball type of purposive sampling was adopted[12]. This ensured a contextualised, systematic, credible, and feasible selection of experiences and opinions[13].

Analysis Approach

Analysis techniques were informed by the principles of grounded theory, applying qualitative coding schemes in thematic analysis. Grounded theorising is useful when researching new organisational forms (Daft & Lewin, 1991), the meanings assigned to unfolding processes (Langley, 1999), and when there is limited knowledge of the social setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This inquiry also utilised the ILP as an analytical tool, accounting for culture and contextual embeddedness.

FINDINGS

The study suggests different social groups draw upon contradictory logics which mirror the institutions they value. They play a role in determining which organisations serve as models and how institutional expectations are conveyed (Greenwood et al., 2008).

Clear exogenous, endogenous, and hybrid SE forms emerged from collected materials, in relation to the setting. Such forms were found to be rooted in Western, non-Western, and transcultural repertoires of action; the latter being a product of indigenous actors' exposure to Western influences or foreign actors increased embeddedness in the local culture.

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[11] Including voluntary work, participation in workshops on SE led by international agents, teaching at local universities, folk ceremonies observation

[12] The research started with a smaller number of participants who, in turn, informed who else should be considered in order to get broad and varied perspectives on SE

[13] As the study progressed, new categories were discovered leading to more sampling in that particular dimension (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973)

Whilst conducting fieldwork, an endemic practice was revealed to the researcher: Xitique, a form of mutual-help and collective cooperation (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Description of Xitique (based on secondary and primary empirical data from this study)

Xitique - ROSCA	(a tsonga word meaning '*saving*')
Attributes	Informal, collective sustainable model based on self-funding; challenges microfinance products as people lack confidence in the banking system (Trindade, 2011) and prefer to borrow from others of the same social class (Vugt, 1992); collateral is not needed nor interest charged (low-risk); mostly, but not exclusively, practiced by women (Dava et al., 1998); satisfies consumption and production needs (Bouman, 1983); flexible (matches people's financial circumstances, the predefined rotation order of the borrowings can be changed in case of 'misfortune', by consensual agreement - Cruz e Silva, 2005); transparent; simple; widespread across the developing world (Bouman, 1977)
Purpose/s	To increase self-control on spending (UN, 2006); to provide liquidity to invest on a business, improve peoples' houses, buy land etc.; to reinforce solidarity between friends, neighbours, co-workers, and family members; to facilitate social interaction. It signifies "assistance for some and social prestige for others" (Lundin, 1999)
Triggers	Institutional voids, *e.g.* absence of well-functioning markets, state deficiencies, limited access to credit (FAO, 2003; Elson, 1997); gender inequality (Casimiro, 2011)
Code of conduct	The practice relies on a kinship based social structure which implies adherence to strict social norms: peer/social pressure. Xitique ethics include: mutual-trust, reciprocity, commitment, and group cohesion; these lead to forced saving, personal reputation within the group (members' history of past savings and repayment records), and relational capital building (Nhambi & Grest, 2007)
Implications	- For the government: Potential benefits of linking ROSCAs to formal financial systems in order to enable opportunities for economic development - For non-profits: NGOs are acting as intermediaries between Xitique groups and international development aid agencies, government entities, and the formal financing system, in an attempt to further empower deprived communities and reduce poverty (INDER Report, 1999) - For for-profits: Financial services are trying to capitalise on existing groups' cohesion since Xitique reduces risk due to lower transaction costs and default rates (Brink & Chavas, 1997) - For SE promoters: Xitique is viewed as a financial resource to either promote entrepreneurial activities and self-employment, or to be included in SE business models (in which beneficiaries use Xitique money to pay for the services being provided)

This paper argues Xitique can be framed as a situated, truly embedded form of SE, which emerges from context-specific struggles. Vulnerable members of society implemented a structured, low-risk, creative collective saving mechanism to overcome the lack of access to credit, enduring poverty, and gender inequalities. Xitique provides access to resources in unique ways, consistent with the concept of *bricolage*, in which extreme scarcity and institutional constraints are minimised via reconfiguring resources at hand (Desa, 2012; Mair & Martí, 2009). Interestingly, 'knowledgeable' research participants on SE, *i.e.* Western actors or SE workshops' attendees, did not agree with this perspective:

"Xitique is not a form of SE, it is simply a subsistence practice where there is not a social entrepreneur aiming at collective good"

Many other participants agreed it was. This suggests an inconsistency between exogenous and more endogenous interpretations, and a bias towards SE Western conceptualisations.[14]

Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c summarise observed SE forms, found to be consistently grounded in sets of dominant ILs which elucidate Western, non-Western, and hybrid repertoires of action.

TABLE 2a
Exogenous SE

Archetype	Western actors (developed in the study to include cases such as the North-American 'Neo-liberal Imperialist Social Entrepreneur' or the European 'Social *Missionary*') tend to associate SE with social business or social enterprise - For-profit companies, incorporated and run by expatriates, with a triple bottom line and inclusive business models, *e.g. Mozambikes Ltd*
Frames of reference	Capitalism; neoliberalism; views predicated on individual over collective action; 'devotion' principles
Dominant ILs	Market, State and Religion: Exogenous SE integrates market logics with elements of state logics since, from a Western perspective, is supposed to encourage more market-oriented activities in addressing social failures, replacing the welfare role of the state. It also encompasses 'religion' as a trigger of agency (Shumate et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2012). This suggests religion logics should be extended in order to accommodate broader spiritual beliefs
Metaphor	"One for all"

TABLE 2b
Endogenous SE

Archetype	ROSCAs were found to be a typical example of endogenous SE, in which group members act as beneficiaries of themselves - Informal family or workplace *Xitique*s
Frames of reference	Collaboration; common thinking; mutual-help; reciprocity; views predicated on collective over individual action; family cohesion; community bonds; gender disparities
Dominant ILs	Community and Family: Endogenous SE integrates community logics with 'clan' logics since, from an African perspective, the concept of family includes multiple connected households. It is mostly necessity-driven and bypasses typically Western ILs as market, state and corporation
Metaphor	"All for one"

[14] Additional illustrative quotes of exogenous, endogenous and hybrid forms of SE will be included

TABLE 2c
Hybrid (transcultural) SE

Archetype	Transcultural embedded actors (developed in the study to include cases such as the Mozambican 'Communitarian Entrepreneur') tend to associate SE with civil society organisations - Non-profit associations with lobbying aims and strong community involvement, *e.g. Savings Bank for Women Development* (founded by a group of women, joined in association, who started a high amount monthly Xitique to legitimise the bank with start-up capital leading to other sources of financing)
Frames of reference	Social activism; cooperation; financial sustainability; views predicated on collective movements; community networks and reputation
Dominant ILs	Community and Market (or other combinations): Hybrid SE blends community logics with market logics in order to access resources, ensuring sustainability and efficiency; Transcultural SE merges Western and non-Western logics
Metaphor	"All for all"

CONCLUSIONS

Community logics are not readily accessible to Western actors when undertaking SE abroad; they have to overcome the barriers of 'not belonging'. Exogenous forms of SE have impoverished communities as target beneficiaries but they do not result from local communities' spontaneous agentic involvement. Conversely, endogenous forms appear to be grounded on community and family principles, reaching sustainability through mechanisms that dispense a market orientation. Xitique involves group investment on each individual whereas exogenous SE emphasise individual motivations to create common social value. Hybrid forms blend community logics with market logics for the sake of sustainability. Transcultural embeddedness allows flexible combinations of logics: an amplified cultural 'toolkit' (Swidler, 1986) which can be strategically configured (McPherson & Sauder, 2013). This suggests that diversified SE practices are shaped by repertoires of action at the micro-level. Such repertoires are embedded in narrower or broader cultural logical frameworks.

This paper delivers novel empirical evidence and contributes to SE scholarship by challenging SE Western assumptions, especially when applied to poor countries[15]. Although ethnographic research presents generalisability restrictions, the theoretical and contextual explanations provided in this inquiry may be extrapolated (Patton, 1990) by inferring the general theoretical phenomenon of which the observed particular is a part (Van de Ven, 2007).

[15] Implications for theory and practice, and future research will be further elaborated prior to presentation

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